

Many of you may recall that back in early May there was discussion of bringing detainees currently housed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to the Marine Corps Base at Quantico or housing them at the Naval Station at Norfolk. The possibility of detainees being shipped to the Hampton Roads became greater this past Thursday as the Washington Post reported that the Federal District Court House in Newport News may be a location for detainee trials.

I remain steadfastly opposed to placing terrorists currently held at Guantanamo Bay into this community or anywhere else in Virginia. Using the Eastern District Courthouse as a location for detainee trials would endanger constituents in an effort to execute an agenda with which the majority of Americans disagree and for which the Administration has not thoroughly planned. Conducting and transferring these terrorists so close to large civilian population centers raises serious concerns and questions of security and logistics for any region forced to accept these detainees. Without a detailed plan from the Administration in place, I do not believe sufficient security and logistical concerns can be met.

In addition to obvious safety concerns, any terrorist trial would be deeply disruptive to the local community. While the Federal Courthouse is a secure installation, the surrounding buildings are not. The state's largest employer, Northrop Grumman Shipyard, is directly across from the Courthouse. I have grave concerns about trying the master-mind of the September 11th attacks across the street from the design shops for our nuclear-powered submarines and aircraft carriers and next door to the very place they are built. Furthermore, multiple municipal buildings are located in the area and many employees share the Courthouse parking lot.

As the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, I have sent a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder asking him several questions about issues related to the transport, detention, and supervision of detainees to Federal Courts and the effects on federal and local authorities and the surrounding population.

The implications of a decision to move these detainees to the Hampton Roads region will have an impact on the daily lives of folks and will incur untold costs to taxpayers as these sites are secured for these trials. I will continue to speak out on this issue as we approach the Administration's planned date for the closure of the Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility in January of 2010.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*